

Connecting the dots

Stories of change: Young Women in Local Economic Development

A flair for fabrics

Summary

Natasha Kanninga, entrepreneur business woman, Zambia

Project involvement: Women in Local Economic Development network and workshops

24-year old Natasha Kanninga was inspired by her mentor from the Connecting the Dots project to set up a clothes design business using traditional fabrics. Despite an initial lack of confidence, with the entrepreneurial skills she has learned and the support of her family, Natasha's business is taking off with orders flowing in as people see her work and have confidence in her designs.

Background

24-year old Natasha Kanninga was born in Mpulungu, Zambia. After completing Luwingu secondary school in 2014, she went on to take a course in Health Assistance at Lubuto college. Now married, Natasha was interested in setting up a business for extra income.

Aims

Natasha was planning to start a business but was not fully confident about her entrepreneurship skills. She needed the extra income to help with buying the family's basic needs, but was also keen to provide something for her community.

"I want to change my financial status and be fully skilled and grow my business in such a way that it will bring about great change in the community especially by creating employment," Natasha explains.

How the CtD project has helped

Natasha joined the Connecting the Dots project, where she received training and mentorship, in particular on entrepreneurship. She was keen to put the knowledge she had gained to good use. With inspiration from her mentor, Natasha realised her own potential to start a business and decided to choose clothes design using traditional African fabrics (*chitenge*).

The journey has been full of ups and downs. At first, when people brought her the material to make into garments, she was nervous about cutting the material in case she made an error. Thanks to the encouragement from a supportive husband, she started developing more confidence in herself. Her mum later taught her the skills to use a sewing machine.

“Both mum and my project mentor really encouraged me, and that has helped me to make the progress that I have made so far in my business,” says Natasha.

Impact

Natasha has been receiving orders from the local community and community groups, including an order for 15 from her local church. Though Natasha had doubts that she may not be up to the task when she first started, with the encouragement of her mentor and family, after completing some jobs and getting positive feedback, she gained the confidence to continue. Seeing the finished products led people to trust her work and brought in more orders.

“The Jo Cox Connecting the Dots project has impacted me greatly and I would like to thank the implementors, mentors and funders,” said Natasha.

“I have come to realise that nothing is difficult in this world: with the help from the right people, one can achieve anything. As it is now, I am able to help my family to buy food and other basic needs. I am able to pay the church tithe and help other church developments. The Connecting the Dots project has brought about positive change in my community,” she added.

